565 596 861 [892] the extended family. The upper class child develops in an atmosphere of alternate indulgence and discipline, with very few responsibilities. Most upper class children attend private schools, which are usually parochial.

565 The social status of the upper class individual is determined by birth and is maintained by the economic and social standing of the individual and his family. The specific determinants of status--wealth, occupation, education, kin relations, and physical appearance[14]--are either fixed or are strongly influenced by the family.

565 596 In the Recôncavo the extended upper class family frequently has a diversified economic structure which enables it to safeguard effectively the position of the individual and the group. Ideally the family group includes the usinêiro (sugar mill owner or administrator), the fazendêiro (cane planter), the doctor, the lawyer-politician, and the urban business man. These various individuals cooperate to build and to maintain the economic, political, and social position of the family. These activities constitute the principal responsibility of the males of the family and justify, it is believed, the characteristic masculine superiority of the society.

565 588 [892] The Lower Class Family. Some of the upper class characteristics are shared by lower class families, especially by the upper stratum, but the contrasts are striking. Lower class families in the Recôncavo seem to have less stability and a less extended character than those of the upper class. Common law marriages and church marriages, not legally binding in Brazil, are quite common and are easily dissolved. The common law marriages of the young adults are frequently temporary, but most older adults seem to establish permanent unions.[15]

565 596 Though kinship relationships are always recognized and cherished, the extended family of the lower class is widely dispersed, and its economic role is usually minor.